



NATIONAL ASSOCIATION of PUBLIC HOSPITALS and HEALTH SYSTEMS

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February 27, 2004

The Honorable John D. Dingell
U.S. House of Representatives
2328 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congressman Dingell:

I am writing on behalf of the National Association of Public Hospitals and Health Systems (NAPH) to express our support for the "FamilyCare Act of 2004," legislation that would give states the option to extend State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP) and Medicaid coverage to parents of enrolled children and to other underserved populations. This important legislation will help assure that our nation's poorest citizens have access to the highest quality healthcare available.

NAPH represents approximately 100 metropolitan area safety net hospitals and health systems. As safety net institutions, our members are essential providers of care to uninsured and vulnerable populations whose access to services would otherwise be limited. In 2001, more than 57 percent of the patients served by NAPH members were either Medicaid recipients or Medicare beneficiaries; another 25 percent were uninsured.

NAPH has consistently been supportive of efforts to expand access to health coverage and to increase enrollment of uninsured individuals in existing programs for which they are already qualified. Your legislation represents an important step toward achieving these goals and we commend you for proposing a significant investment in our nation's health care safety net programs. In addition to expanding health coverage to parents of children enrolled in Medicaid and SCHIP, this legislation includes a variety of other provisions that NAPH members particularly support. For example, extending eligibility to legal immigrants and pregnant women and facilitating outreach and enrollment of eligible children and families would significantly improve the health status of these vulnerable low income populations. We also strongly support provisions that will facilitate families' transition from welfare to work and allow enhanced reimbursement for language interpretation services.

Thank you for your ongoing leadership in developing legislation to ensure that all low-income Americans have access to appropriate health coverage. We look forward to continuing to work with you to develop solutions to the problems of our nation's poor and uninsured.

Sincerely,

Larry S. Gage
President